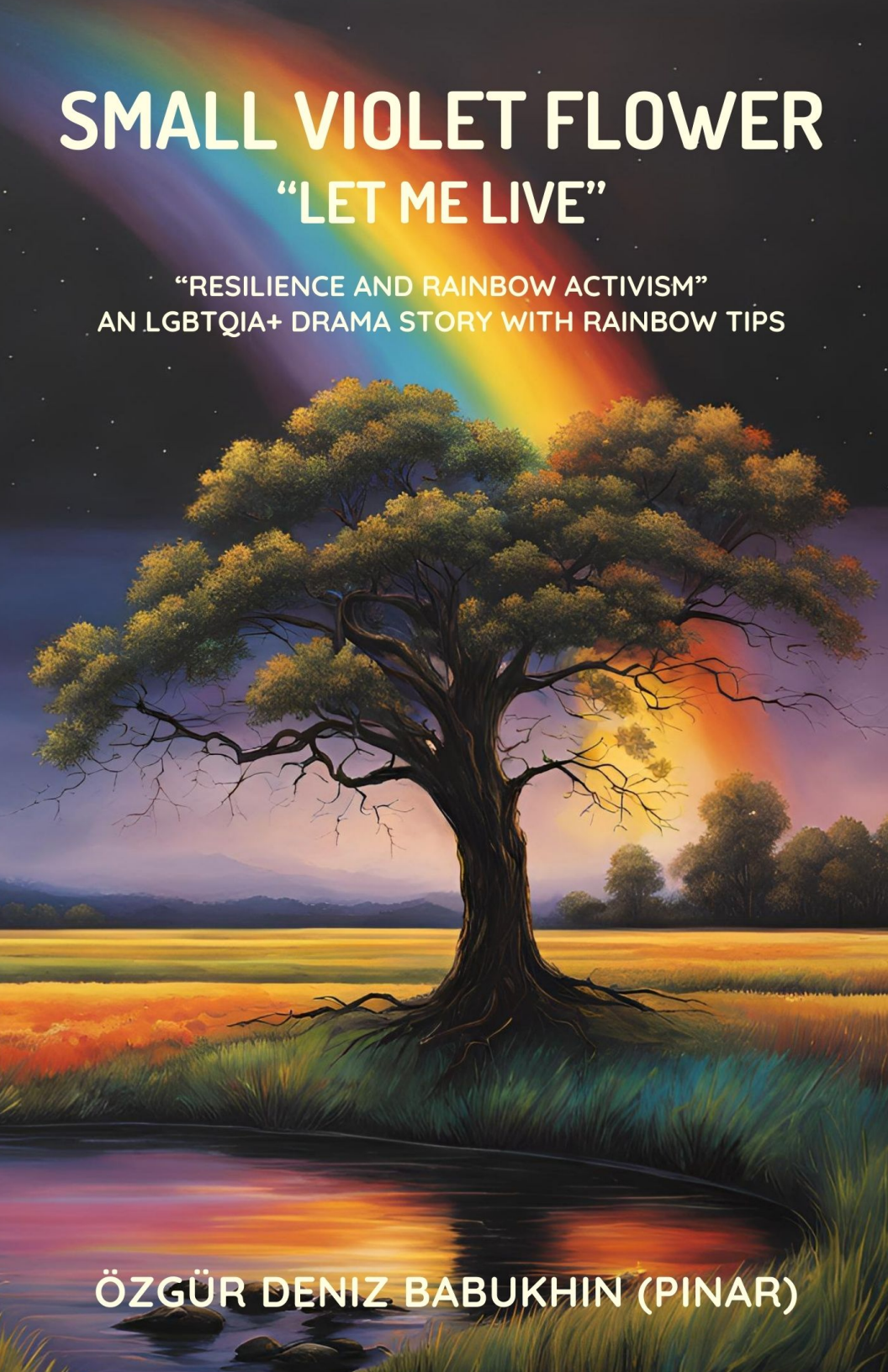
SMALL VIOLET FLOWER

"LET ME LIVE"

"RESILIENCE AND RAINBOW ACTIVISM"
AN LGBTQIA+ DRAMA STORY WITH RAINBOW TIPS



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Content Warning

This book contains content that may be sensitive or triggering for some readers.

Topics include:

Violence and abuse
Discrimination and marginalization
Trauma and emotional distress

These themes are integral to the stories and are included to shed light on real experiences. These themes may be distressing for some readers.

Thank you for choosing to engage with this work in the way that feels right for you.

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Foreword

A tear falls, carrying the weight of silence. A heart beats, yearning to be seen. And somewhere, in the storm, a rainbow stretches across the sky. a promise of hope, love, and belonging. The first chapter tells a story, the second offers tips, and the third focuses on gender.

This book is born from that rainbow, a collection of stories woven with threads of emotion, resilience, and the search for identity. It's about hearts that have broken and healed, tears that have watered dreams, and the vibrant colors of self-discovery that shine despite life's storms.

Inside, you'll find a blend of fiction and reality, stories that speak to the soul, tips to ease the mind, and a glossary to open understanding. It's not a professional guide but a heartfelt offering, a little light from my journey to yours.

Whether you've faced similar storms or are simply seeking a deeper understanding, I hope these words find you with warmth, acceptance, and maybe even a spark of your own rainbow.

With love and light,
Özgür Deniz Babukhin (Pınar)

I am thankful for all rainbows.

Love is Love, because Every Heart is Same

The Heart of Empathy

To step inside another's shoes,
To feel the ache of untold blues,
A bridge unseen, yet strong and wide,
Where hearts can meet and safely hide.

It's hearing words not said aloud,
A quiet strength within the crowd,
A hand that reaches through the dark,
A soft, yet fiercely burning spark.

Empathy, a tender art,
A mirror held to every heart,
It doesn't claim to know the pain,
But walks beside through loss and gain.

It bends, it listens, never breaks,
It holds the weight, yet never takes,
A sacred bond, a healing thread,
A gentle voice when tears are shed.

Though we may stumble, fail to see,
Still, love can grow through empathy,
A world that feels, a world that tries,
Can lift the hurt, and dry the eyes.

So wear this grace in all you do,
And let its light flow out from you,
For when we truly see, we find,
Empathy can heal mankind.

Chapter 1

Violet flower in the Dark

I'll never forget a moment from my childhood, a time when I was just a little heart, around five years old. I was playing with my Barbie, completely immersed in my own world. I didn't understand why it felt so right, but it did. It was maybe about gender; it was about what made me happy.

The Neighbor's Words

Neighbor (a man): "Why is he playing with those toys? That's not normal for a boy."

Mom: "What do you mean?"

Neighbor: "You know, those dolls. He shouldn't be playing with them. It's a problem waiting to happen. Maybe you should stop him."

I remember my mom's hesitation after that conversation. She didn't know what to say or how to respond. She wasn't sure if she should protect me or listen to the older man. That moment stayed with me for years. It was one of the first times I was made to feel like who I was, how I felt, was wrong.

A Shift in the Home

Mom (quietly): "Maybe you shouldn't play with those anymore. It's not right for boys."

Child (me): "But I like them. They make me happy."

Mom: "I know you do, but... maybe it's better if you play with something else. People might think it's strange."

Her words weren't filled with malice; they were just filled with fear. She was afraid of what others would think, afraid of the judgment. And I was afraid of disappointing her.

But that was the beginning of something I couldn't escape: the idea that being myself wasn't acceptable. It wasn't safe. The foundation of my shame was laid down that day, and I would struggle with it for years.

As I grew older, the pressure only intensified.

The Growing Tension

One day, I was in the living room, just being myself, acting a little more feminine, dancing to a song I liked. My father walked in, his face hard, eyes cold.

Father: "What's this? You acting like a girl?"
Me: "No, I'm just... just dancing."
Father: "Boys don't dance like that. If you ever turn out gay, I swear I'll kill you and your mother."

It was as if the world was closing in. A weight settled on my chest, a pressure I could barely understand at the time. How could my father, my own flesh and blood, say something like that to me? How could he be so cruel just because I was different?

One night, the situation escalated. I was only a small heart, but I remember it as if it was yesterday. My father and mother were arguing in the kitchen.

Father (shouting): "If you raise a gay son, I'll kill you. I'll kill both of you!"

Mom (frantically trying to calm him down): "Please, stop. Please, don't say that."

Father: "Do you want me to kill your mom? Is that what you want? Say yes or no?"

I could hear it all, standing in the hallway, frozen. His words cut deep into me, into my very soul. The image of the knife, the rage in his voice. it stayed with me for years. My fear wasn't just emotional; it was physical. I was terrified for my life, terrified for my mother's life, terrified for anything that might make me different.

Lies to Protect Myself

As the years went on, I learned to hide. I learned to lie, to pretend I was someone else. I couldn't tell anyone the truth. How could I? I was terrified of the consequences. My father's words, my mother's fear, the judgment from others—it all wrapped around me like a vice.

Me (to a friend): "Yeah, I've got a girlfriend. I'm into girls."

Friend: "Really? You never talk about girls."

Me (laughing nervously): "Yeah, just been busy with school, you know."

But lying didn't feel right. It made my insides twist with guilt. I wasn't being me, and that felt like I was betraying myself. Yet, I thought it was the only way to survive, the only way to stay safe in a world that didn't understand me.

A Cycle of Fear

It wasn't just my parents who held these beliefs. The outside world mirrored their harshness. At school, I was called names, taunted for being different. I remember the cruel words:

Classmate 1: "You're such a sissy."
Classmate 2: "What's wrong with you? Why are you like that?"
Classmate 3: "It's so obvious. You're gay."

I was like a girl. Yes, I was. Each word was a reminder that I was not welcome. I didn't fit in. I wasn't normal. My heart ached with every judgment, every comment. I wasn't asking for anything but to be accepted, but it felt impossible.

The Long Road to Finding Understanding

I didn't realize anything at the time because i was just a child who needs protection, but what I needed most was to be loved and accepted.

Understanding my behavior, learning about why I felt the way I did. It was not my responsibility in this age. It was the responsibility of my parents. Becuase i was not wrong. All was normal. I was just a little heart.

It wasn't easy. It took years to come to terms with my identity, to find the courage to be myself.Because I didn't have the support I needed growing up.

I learned the importance of surrounding myself with people who would love and accept me for who I am. And that's what I wish for all of you: to find your community, your people, who will accept you, love you, and give you the safety you deserve.

Understanding brought me peace.

Boy things

I remember when I was a little queer, I had no interest in typical “boy things.” Boys didn’t appeal to me, not like the girls did. I would spend most of my time with the girls, playing with them, and talking about things that felt natural. The boys’ conversations didn’t suit me. They often talked about girls, and when they started showing off pictures or talking about how much they liked a girl, it just felt wrong to me.

Mom (taking me to a boys’ meeting): "You need to socialize with the other boys, maybe you’ll feel more comfortable."
Me: "I don’t really like hanging out with them, Mom. They’re not like me."
Mom: "Well, you should try. They’re your peers."

But no matter how much I tried to force myself into these situations, I always felt disconnected. It was hard to explain, and no one seemed to understand that I just wasn’t interested in the same things they were. The conversations were often full of sexual topics, things that felt too invasive, too harsh for me. I could never escape the feeling that something about me wasn’t right in their eyes.

The Bullying

At school, it was even worse. During sport lessons, I would always change in private, not wanting anyone to see me. I was too shy, too uncomfortable with the way others might judge me. But they noticed. They always noticed.

Boy 1 (snickering): "What’s wrong with you? You’re so different. Don’t act like a girl!"
Boy 2 (laughing): "Why are you changing by yourself? Scared we’ll see something?"

That bullying was relentless. They didn't just target me for being different, but also for how I expressed myself, for not fitting the mold. The most hurtful part was when I was told to "be a man." They wanted me to change my voice, my mannerisms, my entire way of being.

Boy 1 (mocking): "Why don't you talk like a man for once? Stop acting like a girl!"

Me (feeling crushed inside): "I am a boy, but this is just how I am."

But despite all this, I couldn't deny the attraction I felt. There was one boy in my class. he had blue eyes, and I had a huge crush on him. He was strong, he was cool, and I found myself drawn to him in a way I couldn't explain. But there was something else: he was rude, homophobic, and sometimes even a bully.

Boy 2 (mocking my feelings): "You're such a girl. Stop liking that guy. He's not into you, he'll never be."

It wasn't just the boys in my class who made me feel like I didn't belong. At school, I was always on the receiving end of cruel comments.They never understood me, they never saw me for who I truly was.

One heart, two lifes

I knew I had two sides of me: one was the real me, the one I couldn't show, and the other was the mask I wore to fit in. I could never truly be myself, and that felt like suffocating. There was a part of me that dreamed about marrying a handsome man. I would fantasize about a future that felt real to me, but it was always hidden away.

Me (to myself): "I like boys, but I can't tell anyone. It's dangerous."

Inner Voice: "What if they find out? What will they say?"

It wasn't just my peers who made me feel like I had to be someone I wasn't. My mother, too, tried to change me. She once asked a group of people for help, thinking they could "fix" me, thinking that I was somehow broken. She believed that because my father wasn't around enough, it caused me to act the way I did.

But that was a terrifying moment. Her words felt like a betrayal. I was already so vulnerable, already afraid of being different, and hearing that my own mother thought I needed to be fixed. it shattered me.

I realize how deeply all of this affected me. The trauma wasn't just from the bullying, or the rejection, or the fear of being myself. It was also from the constant pressure to change, to be someone I wasn't.

There were days when I'd feel so disconnected from everyone around me. I felt like a stranger in my own body, unable to express the truth of who I was.

Losing Trust in People

I remember the moment when I lost my trust in people. It wasn't a sudden thing, but rather a slow buildup over time. I had always believed in the kindness of others, but that belief started to fade as I realized how few people really understood me. The ones who should have been there for me, especially my mom, were more focused on their own desires than on what I needed.

My mom was someone who didn't show love in a way that made sense to me. She lived her life according to her own dreams, and her focus was always on how things appeared to others. She never considered what would make me happy or comfortable. To her, love was about presenting the perfect image to the world, not about nurturing who I truly was. It made me feel invisible. I was always trying to meet her expectations, but she didn't see me for who I really was. The love she gave me felt like it came with strings attached. It wasn't unconditional, and over time, I started to shut down emotionally.

There was, however, one person who did see me. A teacher I had when I was around 13 or 14 asked me a question that changed everything. He said, "If you meet someone you truly love, a handsome man who makes you feel seen and valued, would you live a fake life with a woman, as society expects, or would you be true to yourself and live with him?"

That question was a turning point. I had never thought about it that way before. At that moment, I realized I had a choice. A choice to live authentically, to embrace who I really was, or to live in fear, pretending to be someone else.

The answer wasn't simple, but I knew in my heart that I couldn't keep hiding who I was. I married a man I loved. And while it wasn't easy, and the world around me didn't always accept it, I stood firm in my truth. It wasn't about their approval. it was about my own peace of mind.

I had spent so long trying to be someone else, trying to fit into a world that didn't accept me. But marrying the man I loved was an act of self-acceptance. I couldn't keep pretending.

Even now, sometimes the pressure from those past experiences creeps back. There are moments when I find myself pretending, pretending to be interested in girls or acting "straight" as a defense mechanism. But I know that's just part of the healing process. These are the old habits I'm slowly letting go of.

I've realized that fear and pressure have shaped me for so long. But I'm learning to break free from that. I'm learning to embrace who I truly am, without shame or guilt.

Through all of this, I found my way into Lgbtqia+ actvism. It wasn't the same kind of activism that others might expect. I developed projects, search that helped me express who we are, that allowed us to be visible and heard, even when others didn't understand us.

And I learn that even when the world doesn't accept us, we can still try for visibility. We can still find strength in our authenticity. I won't have an easy life, but I've learned that being true to myself is the most important thing I can do.

I know there will be more struggles ahead, but the most important thing is that I'm no longer afraid to be who I am. And that's a happiness, no matter how small the steps may see becuase my inner voice doesn't judge me.

Flowers

As a child, I found peace in the company of flowers and plants. They were my safe space, my escape. They accepted me for who I was, without judgment.

There was no heartbreak with them, only pure, simple joy. I think that's something people often forget . they can break our hearts. As children, our hearts are small, delicate, and when others break them, it stays with us.

I remember my high school years were filled with stress. I always felt the weight of expectations and pressures around me. But there was one teacher, one shining moment of light in the darkness. She was open, kind, and non-judgmental. One day, she shared with us that she had visited a gay bar and was sad that she wasn't gay because the place was filled with handsome boys.

I smiled at her words, feeling a strange sense of encouragement. It was one of those rare moments when I felt seen, understood, and encouraged to be myself. But as the days went by, the pressures mounted. It wasn't long before my queer joy, that vibrant energy I had, started to fade.

Slowly, the weight of hiding myself, the fear of not being accepted, made me retreat into silence. Being true to myself became harder and harder.

The joy I once felt in my identity was buried deeper, hidden under layers of fear and self-doubt. It wasn't easy, and I didn't have all the answers, but I tried. I kept fighting for that spark of joy, even when everything around me told me to suppress it.

And yet, that fight was exhausting. It took years before I learned how to truly embrace who I was again, without fear. But I never forgot those moments of encouragement, like the ones from my teacher, who showed me that it was okay to be myself, even if the world around me made it so difficult.

Bullying and High School

If you think it's easy, it's not. Living with constant stress leaves marks on your body, and over time, it wears you down. I guess I was holding too much inside. The stomach pain started first, then the constant tiredness. It felt like carrying an invisible weight that no one else could see. Imagine living in a world where no one truly knows you. it's as if you're absent, a ghost. I was deeply sad.

There were moments when I tried to push back, to let myself be seen, even if only a little. I remember one time in high school, my teacher asked, "Do you have a girlfriend?"

I decided to be honest. "No," I said plainly.

He frowned, his expression unreadable, then said, "We'll talk about this in the future. You'll see why it's not normal."

It stung, but I didn't say anything. I just sat there in my green shorts, unapologetically short and feminine, a small rebellion, a quiet way of saying, Hello, I'm here, and I'm queer. But it wasn't easy. My colors didn't sit well with everyone.

Some people wanted to erase them, to smother my light. There was a group of aggressive boys who made school unbearable at times. They were loud, brash, and intimidating. One boy in particular seemed to take pleasure in tormenting me. Every morning, without fail, he'd slap me on the head.

"Hey, sissy!" he'd sneer, his voice dripping with mockery. "What's wrong, fagot? Can't take a joke?"

I didn't respond. I'd just cry silently, holding back the tears until I was alone.

One morning, it all changed. He approached me as usual, ready to humiliate me again, when a classmate of mine stepped in. He grabbed the bully by the arm and pushed him hard against the wall.

"How do you like it, huh?" my classmate said, his voice firm. "What does it feel like when someone stronger than you does this?"

The bully looked stunned, too shocked to respond. For a moment, the hallway was silent.

I stood there frozen, watching as the boy who had made my life a nightmare walked away, for once looking defeated. I was scared. My childhood was fearful, and even now, I can't watch a horror movie. I am highly sensitive for loud voices and fights.

But amidst the fear, I felt something else: relief. For the first time, someone had stood up for me. My classmates gathered around me, urging, "Go say thank you. He did it for you."

I don't remember if I said it or not.I was too overwhelmed at the time. But even now, I feel grateful to that classmate. He didn't just stop the bullying; he gave me a small glimpse of what it felt like to be seen, to be defended.

That moment stayed with me. It was a reminder that even in the darkest places, there are people who will stand up for you, people who care. Because yes, some people are cruel and rude. They'll break your heart in ways you can't fully understand until much later. But then there are others who will pick up the pieces, who will remind you that your colors deserve to shine.

Crying in the dark

The night was silent, but not in a comforting way. It was the kind of silence that weighed on my small heart, pressing down like a heavy blanket. I would lie awake, staring at the ceiling, hiding in my dreams because reality was too painful to face.

In my dreams, I was free. I was open. I didn't have to pretend to be someone else. But in reality, I had learned to play a role. To survive, I had to hide, to act as if I wasn't myself.

I used to think that finding freedom would make everything better. That once I could be open, the pain would vanish. But it wasn't that simple.

One night, as I lay there in the darkness, I whispered to myself, "Why do I feel this way? Why can't I just be happy?"

My body didn't know how to feel safe. I had spent so long in an insecure life that it became my normal. Every nerve in my body was always on high alert, ready to fight, flee, or freeze. I didn't even know what it meant to relax.

I remember the laughter, the teasing, the voices that echoed in my head long after they were gone. "Girl Deniz!" they'd shout, followed by cruel giggles.

And then there were the threats at home.

"Mom," I once asked timidly, "why do they call me that?"

She glanced at me, her expression hard to read. "You need to toughen up," she said curtly. "People don't like it when boys act like girls."

Her words stung, but they were nothing compared to the fear I felt from my father. His anger was a storm that I couldn't escape. I learned to stay quiet, to cry in silence where no one could see me.

As a child, I couldn't fully understand what was happening, but my body knew. It carried the weight of every insult, every threat, every moment of fear. My heart broke in ways I didn't know how to describe.

One day, I tried to explain it to my teacher. "I feel… tired all the time," I said, my voice barely above a whisper.

She looked at me with concern. "Are you sleeping enough, Deniz?"

"It's not that," I replied, shaking my head. "It's like… my heart is always heavy."

She didn't have an answer. Nobody did.

Years later, I learned about the amygdala, the part of the brain that keeps you on high alert when you're in danger. My body had been stuck in that state for so long that I didn't know how to switch it off. The stress hormones coursing through me made me feel exhausted all the time, like I was carrying an invisible burden that no one else could see.

Looking back, I realize that my sadness wasn't just emotional. it was physical too. The constant fear, the insecurity, the lack of safety. it all took a toll.

But here's the truth: children's hearts are fragile. When they're broken, the damage runs deep. And when you don't feel safe, you can't find balance. Life becomes a constant struggle to survive, to protect yourself from the world that seems determined to hurt you.

Even now, I sometimes wonder: what do you do when your life feels like this? How do you heal when the wounds go so deep?

The answer isn't simple, but it starts with one small step, acknowledging the pain and deciding that you deserve better.

Because no heart, no matter how small, should have to cry alone in the dark.

Dream Deniz, Dream

The air was thick with the warmth of summer as I lay on the soft sands of my imagination, the gentle sound of waves lapping against the shore. In my mind, the sea stretched endlessly before me, its blue depths mirroring the longing in my heart.

“Dream, Deniz, dream,” I whispered to myself, clinging to the solace of my fantasies.

In this dream, a man emerged from the horizon, his figure shimmering in the sunlight. He walked toward me, his smile kind, his eyes filled with an affection I had only ever seen in movies. He knelt beside me, brushing the sand from my hands.

"Let’s walk," he said, his voice as calming as the tide.

Together, we wandered along the shoreline. I collected seashells, holding them up for him as treasures. He laughed, not mocking but with genuine warmth, and looked into my eyes. deeply, as though he could see the soul I kept hidden from the world.

"You are beautiful, Deniz," he said, his words reaching a part of me that I didn’t even know existed.

In this dream, I was safe. I was loved. I was whole.

But then reality intruded. The dream dissolved, leaving me staring at the cracked ceiling of my bedroom, a place that felt more like a desert than a home. I turned on my side, burying my face in the pillow as tears spilled out.

I wanted to be loved. To be seen. To have someone hold me and say those words in real life. But that felt impossible.

Back then, no one around me was openly gay. The idea of being out wasn't just terrifying. it felt like a myth, a story told in secret whispers. Meeting someone who could love me seemed as far away as the horizon in my dreams.

Even the idea of finding people like me felt foreign. I didn't know about any apps to meet others. Maybe they didn't exist when I was in high school, or maybe my phone wasn't advanced enough to download them. Either way, I was alone.

I spent hours on the internet, typing things into search bars that I would immediately delete from my browser history. "Handsome boys," I'd search, heart pounding as I scrolled through the images. My pulse raced, not from excitement but from fear. fear of being caught, fear of confronting the truth that lingered just beneath the surface.

But no, I told myself firmly. I wasn't queer.

It was a strange contradiction. I dreamed of a prince, a man who would love me without judgment, yet I couldn't admit to myself that I wanted that. It was like standing in the ocean, letting the waves wash over me, while denying the existence of water.

I pressed my hand to my chest, feeling the rhythm of my heartbeat. "Why can't I just be normal?" I whispered to the darkness.

But the dreams wouldn't stop. They returned every night, vivid and tender, a world where I could exist without fear. They were both a comfort and a torment. a glimpse of what I longed for but couldn't allow myself to reach.

"Dream, Deniz," I repeated to myself, over and over. "Dream."

DREAM DENIZ DREAM

Because in my dreams, at least, I was free.

Dream, Deniz, dream, of skies vast and wide,
Where the world can't see the tears you hide.
A place where your heart can freely sing,
Where love's soft whispers cover everything.

Dream of shores where the sun warmly glows,
Where no one questions the life you chose.
A prince walks near with a tender gaze,
Lighting your soul with his gentle praise.

Dream, Deniz, dream, of hands that hold,
A love so fearless, both kind and bold.
A voice that tells you, "You are enough,"
Softening years of the world's cruel rough.

Dream of nights where stars dance in glee,
Reflecting the joy of who you could be.
A heart unburdened, a spirit untamed,
In a world where your truth needs not be explained.

Dream, Deniz, dream, let your spirit soar,
To places where fear can reach no more.
For even if shadows cloud your sight,
Dreams will guide you to your light.

But Dreams Told a Different Story

I sat alone in his high school classroom, forcing my eyes to follow the chatter of boys around me. They were laughing, sharing jokes, flipping through pictures of girls on their phones. I joined in the charade, nodding and smiling when they spoke about beauty, pretending to notice, pretending to care. Every time I did, a piece of me chipped away.

I whispered to myslef, "Look at the girls, Deniz. Just look. It will protect you."

This routine became a shield, a desperate attempt to deflect suspicion. But deep down, I knew it wasn't who I was. Each forced laugh, each glance at the photos, felt not okay. Over time, it became automatic, a survival mechanism that felt like self-betrayal.

At night, my dreams told a different story. I would find myself walking along a beach, holding the hand of a handsome man. The man's touch was gentle, his voice soft, and his eyes carried a love I had never felt. Together, they collected shells, their laughter echoing across the waves. For a few moments, I felt whole, safe, and free.

But every morning, reality came crashing down. My dreams were replaced with the familiar weight of fear. I woke up shaking, my body trembling as if it were still running from an unseen threat. I didn't remember the dreams that caused it, only the dread they left behind.

The visits to therapists helped, but only so much. "Your body is carrying years of stress," one therapist had told me. "It's trying to protect you, even when the danger is no longer there."

Healing in the Future and my Husband

Years later, my life began to change when I met my husband, a man whose love felt like the safe haven I had only dreamed of. On nights when I woke up shaking, my husband would pull me close, gently stroking my hair.

"It's okay, love. You're safe now," my husband would whisper, his voice a balm to my frayed nerves.

For the first time, I began to believe those words. The shaking lessened, the nightmares faded, and the constant weight of fear started to lift.

One evening, as we sat together on the couch, I opened up. "You know, it wasn't being queer that broke me. It was the hate, the pressure, the constant pretending. I wasn't born with a broken heart. I was born as a rainbow. But where is the colors now?"

My husband held his hand tightly, looking at me with a mixture of love and sorrow. "But look at you now. You're not broken. You're healing. And I'm here for every step."

I smiled faintly, my heart swelling with gratitude. "You've done what years of therapy couldn't. You made me feel safe."

With the right love, the right support, and the strength I had carried all along, I could rebuild the pieces of my life.

But He is human and burning out is his right, too.

Back to High School Times.

From dreaming to fiction stories

Dreaming gave me the power of fiction. As a teenager, I would type out stories, imagining myself as someone else, crafting. Creating these stories became a form of healing, a way to escape reality and find solace in my imagination.

Look at the girls, Deniz. Just look. It will protect you.

It became a script I rehearsed and performed daily. "Look at her," I'd say, pointing out a girl to the boys around me. I mimicked their tones, their comments, their laughs. But inside, it felt hollow and wrong. I wasn't attracted to these girls, not in the way I was pretending. Instead, I was trying to survive, to blend in, to protect myself from the harsh judgment of those around me.

The act was exhausting. I forced myself to imagine that I liked girls, pushing down the truth I already knew deep inside. But the pretense left marks, seeping into my sense of self. Even years later, when I was in safer spaces and surrounded by accepting people, I found myself slipping into those old habits. A part of me, shaped by trauma, still clung to the idea that looking at girls was a way to avoid danger.

Even now, as an adult, even in moments when I know I'm safe, my mind reverts to the patterns I created as a teenager.

I was feminine. But that femininity felt like a target, a weakness that others could exploit. My mind, shaped by years of fear, told me I needed protection. Protection from judgment, cruel words, and rejection.

Looking back now, I can see how much damage those years caused. I'm still untangling myself from the web of

defense mechanisms I built. The habits, the behaviors, the internalized fears. they linger, long after the bullies are gone.

At some point, the behavior I had adopted as a teenager evolved.

I couldn't truly look at girls anymore, not in the way my peers did. Instead of feigning interest to avoid being labeled, I started avoiding them altogether. I felt an awkwardness around girls, a strange, almost visceral discomfort. Being around them made me feel exposed, vulnerable, as though someone might see through my defenses.

In crowded hallways or casual conversations, I caught myself avoiding eye contact with girls, fumbling over my words, or stepping away, as though proximity itself was dangerous. My mind had built a barrier, associating those interactions with fear.

There was always a lingering dread, a gnawing feeling that someone would force me to explain myself to justify my behavior, my sexual orientation, my very existence.

I started behaving awkwardly because of the pressure I felt to be something I wasn't.

I carried an invisible weight, a burden that distorted my relationships and my sense of self. The pressure wasn't just internal. it came from years of external judgment, from the whispered words and mocking laughs of my peers.

It had left an imprint so deep that even in safe spaces, I felt the need to protect myself.

But I also know something else: beneath the layers of fear and pretense, there is music inside me. a vibrant, beautiful melody that has always been there. It's a song of my true self, waiting to be heard.

And now, even as I struggle to repair the damage, I'm determined to let that music play. Slowly, carefully, I'm learning to unlearn the defenses, to remind myself that I no longer need to pretend. The world may not have been kind to me, but I'm learning to be kind to myself.

After High School: Thrown Into the Storms
Adult life as a teen, There is no family

Deniz was alone. "It was a huge baby steps for an adult life as a teenager"

Sometimes, when I think about my life, it feels like I'm standing outside myself, watching my story play out. Listening to it as though I'm someone else, a third person. And when I do, my tears become unstoppable. Becuase, Deniz suffered a lot. It's as if my tears water the small, delicate violet flower I've been nurturing inside me.

But there came a time when I had to say, "Enough."

I always tried of being someone who could teach and inspire others in our LGBTQIA+ community. I wanted to create an projects that would make a difference, that would offer solace and understanding. But the road wasn't easy. I felt unsafe. My efforts were rooted in behaviour science, but the truth is, even speaking about it openly was with difficulty. I tried, though. I kept trying alone.

But, At the same time, I was marred by financial difficulties and the emotional toll of my family's rejection. My family had promised to support me for my university, but they abandoned me halfway. It was like losing my footing

while climbing a steep hill. already tired, already struggling. Their betrayal left me alone, compounding the challenges. Surviving as a teen queer person in a world that rejected. and I was alone.

I didn't give up. I found another path for my education. I pursued a software development program, completed it, and eventually worked as a teacher in that field. It was an important step forward.

But still, the pain lingered. I couldn't graduate from engineering due to the lack of financial support and the emotional damage inflicted by my family and insecure positions about my gender identity. That unfulfilled dream remains a deep ache in my heart. I felt the weight of being unsafe, of not having a strong enough shell to protect myself. And even now, that feeling hasn't completely left me.

My curiosity about human behavior became an passion, fueled by my desperate desire to be accepted for all of us. Because it was the reason that my life harmed. How could I make people okay with us? Even my own mother couldn't accept me. She hated parts of me I couldn't change. How do you explain your truth to someone who refuses to listen?

So, I was getting deeper into the science of behavior. I tried to understand the dynamics of acceptance and prejudice. Why did people act the way they did? How could our visibility make a difference? Back then, it felt like we were invisible. The struggle for visibility was exhausting but essential. Even as I tried to create projects and learn more, I often felt like I was living in a nightmare.

My relationships during that time were another source of pain. I gravitated toward people who were toxic, problematic, even violent. One ex-boyfriend, in particular,

left scars that took years to heal. He was controlling and abusive, and leaving him felt impossible.

It wasn't just the fear of what he might do; it was the fear of being alone, of having no support. My mother's insults about my identity were constant, a painful reminder that even at home, I wasn't safe.

In the storms, one day, my husband entered my life.

It wasn't a perfect love story, far from it. There were no fairy tales, no pink-tinted dreams of romance. Because years of living in unsafe environments had left me deeply insecure. The pressures I'd endured cast a long shadow over our relationship. In him, I found love and real healing. He covered me with his warmth, his care, his unwavering support. His touch had a way of soothing the wounds I carried.

I never forget the way he caressed my hair during my worst nightmares, grounding me in a calmness where love could exist alongside my pain. After a series of horrible relationships, he was my gift. A partner who didn't just see my brokenness but embraced it.

Surely, Our journey wasn't without challenges. We are very different personalities, and at times, those differences felt like mountains to climb. Yet, his strength, his ability to love me through my harsh life, helped me heal in ways I never thought possible.

But even as I found solace in his arms, my ex boyfriend continued to haunt me.He wouldn't let go. He followed me, threatened me, sent me emails from different accounts, fake accounts vith my name, Sharing my private ptohos in social media and called from various numbers to remind me that he could still harm me.

Living in constant fear wasn't new to me, but this felt unbearable. I found my husband that I began to truly feel safe.

When you have no support, no resources, it's so much harder to navigate these challenges. But if there's one thing I've learned, it's that healing is possible, not easy, not quick, but possible. And my husband was with me.

Feel Positive, A Story of Finding Love

The beatiful violet flower who only wanted to bloom in peace. For years, I lived in a world where every step felt uncertain, every moment shadowed by fear because of the rainbow colors. But even in those turbulent times, a light emerged. a love so profound, it promised to heal wounds that had long seemed incurable.

He came into my life like a gentle breeze on a scorching day, tender and steady. This man, lovely and compassionate, became more than just a partner. He became my heart . For me, he was a prince. the embodiment of safety, warmth, and belonging.

Our love was nothing short of transformative. For the first time, I felt what it was like to be held, not just physically but emotionally. We shared everything: quiet evenings filled with laughter, holidays exploring new places, and simple moments that became treasures, a hand held during nights, an encouraging smile during hard days, or the peaceful rhythm of falling asleep in his arms.

I tried to teach him how to play the piano, laughing together at the clumsy first notes. We learned to swim together, splashing and cheering each other on. Life felt full, almost perfect. After years of searching for acceptance, I

finally felt like I had found a home, not in a place, but in him.

But life, as it often does, had other plans.

HIV-positive status stole our happiness, tearing us apart, leaving us with one heart, separated by oceans. There seemed to be no other solution or perhaps we couldn't see one.

I truly thought we'd found our forever. After 2.5 years of living together, of building a life that felt like a dream, I believed I would finally be happy. We had made plans for an ordinary, beautiful life. He would study while I worked. Then I would study, and he would work. We imagined a future of shared responsibility, shared growth, and shared joy.

But all those plans were destroyed.

When I remember those days, tears fall without stopping. I cried for the happy moments we had and for the happiness that was stolen from us. Why did life take him away? Why did it take the one person who gave me love, safety, and hope?

He kissed me like I was the only person in the world. He taught me what it was to be loved fully, even as I carried my fears and insecurities from years of rejection and hurt.

But now, I cry alone.

After we were forced apart, I started streaming. I shared my story and talked about the rainbow of identities and experiences in our community. I talked about behavioral science, about visibility, about finding strength in vulnerability.

And I cry at nights.

The life we had, the life we dreamed of, and the love we shared. He is my family, my heart, my everything. Life may keep testing me, and I may keep falling, but I always carry the memory of him, the man who made me feel like I was a small violet flower. He made me feel like I could bloom.

He is my koala

I call him my koala because he holds me tight, wrapping me in his warmth until all the noise in my mind fades away. When he hugs me, it feels like the world stops. just us, his arms around me, and the steady rhythm of our hearts.

He hugs so strongly, like he's afraid to let go, and I always fall asleep feeling safe, feeling loved. He's my koala, my safe place, my home.

But now, as I sit here. My koala, where are you?

The nights are lonelier now, quieter, colder. I miss for the love we shared, for the way he made me feel whole.

Hope in Rainbows

A tear falls soft, a quiet much,
As hope blooms beneath the sky.
The weight of dreams, both near and far,
Stirs the heart like a distant star.

Through every drop, a light will show,
A rainbow born from tears below.

For hope is not a gentle?,
Rain and colors free.
So let your tears cascade and fall,
For hope, like rainbows, rises tall.

I Miss You

I miss you in the quiet of the night,
When the stars whisper secrets of their light.
I miss your touch, your warmth, your hugs,
The gentle love that lived in your arms.

I miss the way your laughter filled the air,
A melody that made the world less bare.
I miss your hand in mine, so strong, so true,
Each moment shared, I long for you.

I miss the mornings, you and your breath,
Waking beside you felt like a dream.
The way you'd smile, the way you'd care,
The love we built, beyond compare.

I miss the way you calmed my fears,
How your voice could dry my tears.
Though life has pulled us far apart,
You'll always have a home in my heart.

I miss you, my love, my sweetest song,
In your arms is where I belong.
Though the distance aches, the pain here,
I'll cherish the love that made me whole.

All we seek is to be LOVED

Chapter 2

Acceptence

Acceptance was my first step in reducing stress. For me, it started from within and then moved outward. Accepting myself was incredibly difficult. I felt immense pressure from norms, and in the end, I found myself trapped by that pressure. It was very hard. In the beginning, I tried to change, but nothing worked. Then, my therapist told me, "You are not wrong. You are gay." At that time, I didn't know much about gender topics. It was hard to say it aloud, but slowly, slowly, I began to feel more open, at least with myself. However, being hidden was a huge burden.

From my childhood, I was attracted to boys, starting at around 12 years old. I clearly remember feeling that way. I was also somewhat feminine. Girls would tell me, "You are a good person, hard-working, smart, funny, but you are gay." I remember asking one of my friends, "How do you know?" and C. replied, "You'll see in the future." And they were right.

It was very difficult. I would often play with my mom's makeup, wear earrings, and so on. Inner pressures started during my teenage years when I realized that I liked boys, but I couldn't accept the reality. I kept forcing myself to suppress it.. One day, I confessed to myself that I was in love with a boy, and soon others found out. That's when everything became harder. I faced hateful speech and pressure from many people. During that time, in my environment, being LGBTQIA+ was extremely hidden and not accepted. Acceptance was so challenging, and self-

acceptance was even harder when there was no social support. Living hidden is a horrible feeling.

I had no one to talk to. My mom reacted terribly. She subjected me to violence and hateful speech, saying that my being gay was her fault. I felt completely isolated. It's understandable to be scared, afraid of what could happen if I spoke up. But I am so happy that today there are more support options. If you're going through something similar, I strongly encourage you to reach out to an LGBTQIA+ support line. I wish I had done that back then. Speaking with someone can greatly help with self-acceptance. It's essential. Without it, it feels incredibly heavy. I can still remember how hard those times were.

Before the rainbow, there is always a storm. Sometimes, storms may return, but I believe the rainbow will always follow. It was all so hard, but through it, I found solace in learning and discovering anchors to help me move past those dark days.

Acceptance came with time, especially with the support of therapist. My mom continued to reject me, but I didn't realize how crucial it was to reach out for support. If you are in a similar situation, please find an LGBTQIA+ support group. Don't be afraid to contact them. There is nothing wrong with who you are. They can guide you and help you feel less alone. When you realize that you're not alone, you'll feel so much lighter. Carrying this burden by yourself is unnecessary. You don't have to do it alone. We should be together.

My Steps for Acceptance

1- Acknowledge Your Feelings

The first step is to acknowledge how you feel about your gender and sexual orientation. Whether you feel comfortable or uncertain, it's okay to explore both. Your feelings are valid, no matter where you are on your journey.

2- Understand That It's Normal to Question

Many people go through periods of questioning their gender and sexual orientation. It's a natural part of understanding yourself. Don't rush the process; give yourself time to figure out what feels right.

3- Find Supportive People

Surround yourself with people who accept you for who you are, including your gender identity and sexual orientation. Whether it's friends, family, or LGBTQIA+ support groups, having support is crucial on your path to acceptance.

4- Educate Yourself

Learning about different gender identities and sexual orientations helps you understand your own better. Explore resources on gender identity (like non-binary, genderfluid, transgender) and sexual orientation (like gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual). This knowledge can empower you.

5- Start with Self-Acceptance

Acceptance begins within. It may be difficult at first, but start by affirming yourself. Whether it's using language that feels right (like identifying as gay, queer, or non-binary) or taking small steps like dressing in a way that feels authentic, practice accepting who you are, inside and out.

6- Use the Language that Feels Right

Language is powerful. If terms like "bisexual," "pansexual," or "asexual" resonate with your sexual orientation, embrace them. Similarly, use gender-related terms (like "non-binary" or "transgender") that align with how you feel. And remember, these terms can change as you discover more about yourself.

7- Respect Others' Journeys

Just as your path to gender and orientation acceptance is unique, so is everyone else's. Be kind and patient with others, and give yourself the same understanding as you explore your own identity.

8- Get Professional Support

If it feels overwhelming, consider reaching out to a therapist, especially one knowledgeable about gender and sexuality. Speaking to someone who understands these topics can offer clarity and help you feel supported in your journey.

9- Be Patient with Yourself

Acceptance is a process, and it takes time. There will be ups and downs. Don't be hard on yourself. It's normal for your identity or orientation to evolve. Take each day at your own pace and celebrate the progress you've made.

10- Celebrate Your Progress

Each step forward, whether it's feeling more comfortable with your gender identity or sexual orientation, is a victory.

Celebrate your small wins, like embracing new terms, expressing your true self, or finding new supportive people.

My Emotional Journey to Acceptance

I want to share my heart with you: the feelings you may experience on your path to self-acceptance are completely normal. I've been through them too, and if you're feeling them, it's okay.

At first, I felt **confused**. I didn't understand my feelings or my identity. It was like a fog, and I didn't know where I was going. I felt lost and unsure about myself, and it was hard to make sense of what I was feeling.

Fear. I **feared** what others would think of me. Would they reject me? Would I be judged or discriminated against? I was terrified of the unknown and of stepping into the world as my true self.

Along the way, I felt **shame**. I felt like something was wrong with me because I didn't fit the mold of what others expected. Society's standards made me question myself. I felt unworthy and broken, but those feelings are part of the process.

There was also **anger**. I was frustrated with myself for not being able to accept. I was angry at expectations and the way people treated me.

In some moments, I found myself **bargaining,** trying to convince myself I could change, that if I just did things differently, maybe I could avoid the pain and rejection. I tried to deny parts of myself to make things easier, but deep down, I knew it wasn't true.

Sadness.

But as I moved through these feelings, I began self-reflection. I started to look inward and understand why I felt the way I did. I questioned my beliefs, explored my identity, and began to accept that my true self was okay. This was a turning point where I started to see my worth and value, despite everything.

Slowly, I began to feel **relief**. The weight of hiding who I was started to lift. I stopped trying to change myself to fit someone else's idea of who I should be. I realized that accepting myself was the key to finding peace.

Finally, I reached **acceptance**. It wasn't all at once, but over time, I began to fully embrace who I am. I felt peace, comfort, and pride in being my authentic self. I realized that I was worthy of love, respect, and happiness, just as I am.

If you're experiencing confusion, fear, anger, shame, or any other feelings, remember they're part of the journey. It's okay to feel these things. In time, you will find your way to acceptance, just like I did.

You're not alone, and it's okay to take it at your own pace. The most important thing is to be kind to yourself as you navigate these emotions. You will get there.

I want to remind again, If you feel the need for professional support, do not shy or hesitate , it's important to find a therapist who is LGBTQIA+ or gender-focused or Reaching out to LGBTQIA+ helplines can also provide valuable support.

Finding Safe Environments and Spaces

It's incredibly important to surround yourself with people who accept you for who you truly are. Looking back, I realize one of my biggest mistakes was trying to maintain friendships with people who didn't accept me. This created a real problem because, as humans, we need connection. But true connection requires trust, security, and the ability to be open. If you can't be yourself in a friendship or relationship, real connection and attachment are impossible.

The Cycle of Hiding and Lying

Sometimes, to feel secure, we hide parts of ourselves or even lie. Initially, this might seem like a way to protect yourself, especially in difficult or unsafe situations. However, it can become a habit, even in safe spaces, and impact your relationships and future. You might start lying about small, simple things, and over time, it becomes exhausting.

Coming out isn't always easy, especially within the pressures and dangers we face as one of the LGBTQIA+ person. Don't judge yourself for protecting yourself in the ways you have. Instead, take small steps toward breaking free from that cycle, with support if needed.

Support for Coming Out

Coming out is one of the most powerful ways to live authentically and break free from the stress of hiding. But remember, you don't need to do it alone. Reach out to LGBTQIA+ helplines or therapists, they can guide and support you. They'll help you create a plan that works for

your situation, timing, and comfort level. Support makes a big difference, and you are never alone in this journey.

I've been through this, and I know how hard it can be. For a long time, I isolated myself and carried the weight alone. But when you carry that weight for too long, it drains your energy and leaves you feeling exhausted. It's like searching for light in the dark. Fear was a constant in my life, but despite that, I kept trying in small ways to help myself.

Finding Your Rainbow Place

I understood what we all dream of: a life that is free, open, happy, and where we feel accepted. To reach this, it's essential to have support. Trying to do everything on your own is overwhelming and can lead to burnout. Trust me, I've been there.

Most importantly, be yourself. You don't need to prove anything to anyone by pretending to be smarter, more successful, or someone you're not. You don't need to act a certain way to find love and acceptance. Just be yourself, and you'll find people who love and value you as you are.

When you do, you'll feel it throughout your body, a sense of relief and relaxation. The secret to peace is finding your rainbow place, where you can truly belong. It may not be easy, but it's worth it. You deserve to feel safe, loved, and free.

"Be Yourself"

Ways to Regulate and Self-Regulate Emotionally

What is Regulation and Self-Regulation?

Regulation refers to how we manage our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in response to challenges or stress. It often involves external support, like reaching out to friends or joining communities, to help us feel balanced.

Self-regulation, on the other hand, is about using personal strategies to calm and center yourself when external help isn't immediately available. It's about recognizing your emotions and taking steps to manage them in a healthy way.

Both are essential for emotional well-being, especially when navigating difficult situations or identities.

Tips for Regulation and Self-Regulation

1. Spend Time with Chosen Friends

Being with people who accept you as you are can provide emotional relief and a sense of belonging.

Plan small, stress-free activities like chatting over coffee or going for a walk.

2. Journaling

Write down your thoughts and feelings to process emotions.

Journaling can help identify patterns and clarify what helps you feel better.

Prompts like "What do I feel right now?" or "What do I need to feel supported?" can guide you.

3. Visualization

Imagine a safe, peaceful space in your mind.

Focus on sensory details, what you see, hear, and feel in this place.

This technique creates a mental escape and reduces stress.

4. Connect with Nature

Spend time outdoors to reset your mind and body.

Activities like walking, sitting under a tree, or observing the sky can bring calmness.

If outdoor access is limited, bring nature indoors with plants or nature-themed sounds and images.

5. Join LGBTQIA+ Support Groups or Communities

Connect with people who understand and validate your experiences.

Whether online or in-person, sharing stories can provide comfort and belonging.

6. Volunteer or Help Others

Giving back to your community can create a sense of purpose and connection.

Consider volunteering with LGBTQIA+ organizations or causes that resonate with you.

7. Engage in Lighthearted Social Activities

Fun, casual activities like trivia nights, game sessions, or creative workshops can relieve stress.

They also help build bonds in a low-pressure environment.

8. Create or Join a "Chosen Family"

Surround yourself with trusted friends and allies who provide unconditional support.

Build meaningful traditions and relationships that feel safe and affirming.

9. Limit Time with Toxic or Unsupportive People

Protect your energy by setting boundaries with people who make you feel unsafe or drained.

Prioritize relationships that bring positivity and comfort.

10. Share Meals or Cooking Experiences

Cooking and sharing meals with others can create opportunities for bonding and relaxation.

It's a simple way to connect and feel less alone.

11. Lean on LGBTQIA+ Helplines and Peer Support Networks

Helplines and peer networks are valuable for immediate guidance and emotional support.

You don't have to navigate difficult emotions or situations alone,these resources are there to help.

12. Engage in Positive Social Media Spaces

Follow uplifting, affirming accounts that celebrate diversity and inclusion.

Join supportive online groups or forums for connection and inspiration.

Be aware of your digital consumption,unfollow anything that feels draining or invalidating.

Final Thoughts

Regulation is about finding balance and safety, whether through the support of others or through personal strategies.

By combining social, creative, and self-care approaches, you can navigate tough emotions while staying connected to yourself and your community. Remember, you are never alone, and support is always within reach.

And personally i please you, stay in your safe spaces and accepted friendships. Your system needs safety to heal and thrive. When you feel secure, you'll find yourself shining naturally, just like you deserve. <3

Learning as an anchor

I learned about these methods of regulation and healing very late in life. My upbringing was far from easy. My father was not as father. My mom was often aggressive and agitated. We had no meaningful contact with extended family, leaving me isolated.

I received no protection from anyone during these times. Beucase i was scared.

In the midst of this, I discovered that learning became my anchor. I immersed myself in self-development, reading extensively and honing my skills. I studied web development, and through hard work.

I'm proud, but looking back, I realize I was simply surviving. The lack of safety and the constant stress of being both unseen and unsupported deeply affected my sense of security and my ability to thrive.

The Importance of Safety and Support

If you are in a challenging situation, I want you to know that self-regulation and your chosen environment can be lifesaving. These tools can help you hold on until you can change your circumstances. It's vital to feel safe, as healing begins when you are in a secure environment.

If self-regulation alone isn't enough, reach out for help. Speak to someone you trust or contact support groups or professionals. My biggest mistake was not having a strong enough support system and not feeling safe enough to share my struggles. Don't make the same mistake.

Help is available, and you deserve it.

While facing these challenges, I often thought about how to shift mindsets around me. My mother's beliefs were immovable, and many others I encountered were stuck in their hatred or ignorance. Despite this, I tried to make a difference through small projects to educate others about identity and acceptance.

These efforts, however small, helped me feel like I was contributing to a larger cause. I believe in the power of taking and giving help. It creates a cycle of support that can change lives. Joining support groups or engaging in community projects can be incredibly fulfilling and healing.

A Call for Togetherness and Positivity

We owe so much to those who have worked to make our community visible and accepted. If you can, try to contribute to this positive change. Visibility, education, and social projects. All of these efforts help create a more inclusive world.

However, we must do this with love and positivity. Respond to hate with kindness, showing the beauty of our rainbow and the strength of our togetherness. In some places, this may be challenging or even risky, but even small, safe steps can make a difference.

Empathy and Feeling Cared For

Empathy is essential, especially for those of us who come from challenging or unstable backgrounds. It's not always easy for others to fully understand what we've been through —100% empathy may not be possible. But feeling cared for and understood can make a world of difference.

Many of us carry behaviors or reactions rooted in our past experiences, which can sometimes appear awkward, random, or hard to explain. This is why it's helpful to learn about your own behaviors and patterns. When you begin to understand yourself better, it becomes easier to share these insights with the people you trust. Opening up to friends about the roots of your behaviors, when you're ready, can foster understanding and strengthen connections.

Of course, not everyone will respond with empathy. If someone chooses to judge you, that's their decision. But you also have the right to choose who you allow into your life. Prioritize friendships and relationships where you feel truly supported.

Seek connections where you are **included**, **heard**, **understood**, **valued**, and **loved**. These are the kinds of relationships that nurture your well-being.

At the same time, recognize the importance of stepping away from negativity. If you're surrounded by judgment, jealousy, hate, or other toxic emotions, it's essential to remove yourself from those environments when possible. These negative dynamics can drain your energy and take a toll on your mental health. Instead, focus on building a circle of supportive friends who genuinely care for you and want to see you thrive.

Feeling cared for doesn't just come from grand gestures; it's found in small, meaningful moments of connection. Being heard, being valued, and feeling like you belong are powerful sources of healing. If you feel comfortable, try to express your needs to those close to you. it's okay to let them know how they can support you.

For all of us, life's hardships can feel overwhelming at times. It's normal to feel emotional, to cry, or to need a moment to process everything. Those feelings don't make you weak. they're a sign that you're human. What matters is how you move forward. Even in the toughest times, taking small steps with the support of caring people can make a difference.

Remember, your well-being matters. Surround yourself with people who accept and care for you, and don't forget to extend that same care to yourself.

Healing and growth take time, but with the right environment and support, you can find your strength and shine.

Understanding Ourselves to Heal

I found my solution in behavioral science. Learning about my nervous system and how it influences my emotions and actions has been transformative. For me, understanding the roots of my behavior was not just a personal interest. it was a necessity. Asking the question "why" helped me uncover patterns and identify causes, which made it easier to address challenges. Of course, change is never easy, but understanding is the first step toward healing. To understand and to feel understood. These are essential.

When we acknowledge and see our needs clearly, we can begin to find solutions and take meaningful steps forward. That's why understanding ourselves is so crucial. it provides clarity and direction for healing.

The Power of Community and Connection

I'll be honest, there was a time when I wasn't connected to an LGBTQIA+ community or support system. Looking back, I realize that was one of my biggest mistakes. During moments of hardship, I tried to handle everything alone. Is that possible? No, it isn't.

I reached a point where fear consumed me. Even attending university felt overwhelming. I felt disconnected from everything, myself, my goals, my sense of belonging. I remember how I lost the colors of life, even though I'm part of the rainbow. Isolation has that effect: when you cut yourself off from others, you start to lose pieces of yourself. You lose the vibrancy and joy that come from being authentic and supported.

It's impossible to provide for your own well-being when you can't embrace who you truly are. Connection, with yourself and with a supportive community, is vital for healing and thriving. Don't let fear hold you back. Find your circle, your chosen family, and let them remind you of your colors. The rainbow is always there, waiting for you to see it again.

Rainbow Breath: A Breathing Exercise for LGBTQIA+ Individuals

This breathing exercise is designed to promote calm, self-love, and empowerment while connecting to the vibrant diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community. Each step incorporates a color of the rainbow, symbolizing different aspects of strength and unity.

Preparation:

Find a quiet, comfortable space where you can sit or lie down.

Place your hands gently on your heart or rest them on your lap.

Close your eyes, or lower your gaze to a soft focus if that feels more comfortable.

Rainbow Breath Steps

Red (Safety and Grounding):

Inhale deeply through your nose for 4 seconds.

Imagine a warm red light filling your body, grounding you in safety and belonging.

Exhale slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds, releasing fear and tension.

Orange (Joy and Creativity):

Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.

Picture a glowing orange light in your chest, representing your unique creativity and joy.

Exhale gently for 6 seconds, letting go of self-doubt.

Yellow (Confidence and Strength):

Inhale deeply for 4 seconds.

Visualize a bright yellow light radiating from your core, filling you with confidence and resilience.

Exhale slowly for 6 seconds, releasing any feelings of insecurity.

Green (Love and Connection):

Inhale deeply for 4 seconds.

Imagine a soft green light surrounding your heart, symbolizing unconditional love for yourself and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Exhale for 6 seconds, sending love and compassion into the world.

Blue (Calm and Expression):

Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds.
Picture a serene blue light in your throat, representing your voice and truth.

Exhale for 6 seconds, releasing the fear of being misunderstood.

Indigo (Wisdom and Clarity):

Inhale deeply for 4 seconds.

See an indigo light glowing in your mind, offering clarity and self-awareness.

Exhale gently for 6 seconds, letting go of confusion or self-doubt.

Violet (Spirit and Empowerment):

Inhale deeply for 4 seconds.

Envision a radiant violet light enveloping your whole being, connecting you to your highest self.

Exhale for 6 seconds, releasing any remaining negativity.

Closing:

After completing the rainbow, take a deep breath in and hold it for 3 seconds. As you exhale, imagine the entire spectrum of colors radiating from you, creating a shield of light that protects and celebrates who you are.

Open your eyes slowly and return to the present moment with gratitude for yourself and the vibrant community you're part of.

Affirmation: After the exercise, say this affirmation to yourself:

"I am vibrant, I am enough. My identity is a source of pride, love, and calmness."

This exercise can be practiced daily or whenever you need a moment to reconnect with your inner strength and the beauty of your identity.

CBT Daily Guide for LGBTQIA+

Life can be overwhelming, but CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) is like having a pocket tool that helped me manage stress and emotions. The best part? You can totally make this into a notepad on your phone to use daily.

Here's my example how you can try it out:

1. Start with a Morning Check-In

Ask yourself: How do I feel right now?

Write 1–2 words (e.g., "anxious," "hopeful,")

Jot down: What's on my mind?

Example: "Worried about work," or "Excited to see my friend."

Why it helps:
Naming your feelings reduces their intensity. It's like shining a flashlight in a dark room—it helps you see what's there.

2. Spot Unhelpful Thoughts
Throughout the day, notice moments when you feel stressed or down. Use your notepad to track:

The Situation: What happened?

Example: "A colleague ignored me in the meeting."

My Thought: What did I think?

Example: "They don't respect me because I'm queer."

Is it True?: Challenge the thought.

Ask: "Could there be another reason?"

New thought: "Maybe they were distracted, not intentional."

Why it helps:
This rewires your brain to see things from a balanced perspective, not through the lens of fear or past hurt.

3. Find Affirming Evidence

Write down: What's one positive thing about me today?

Example: "I spoke up for myself," or "I comforted a friend."

Why it helps:
It's easy to focus on what's wrong, but noticing small wins builds your self-esteem.

4. Plan One Joyful Action

Each day, pick one thing to nurture your well-being:

Text a supportive friend.
Watch a queer-positive show.
Dance to your favorite song.

Why it helps:
Small joys can break negative thought cycles and remind you that life has bright spots.

5. Evening Reflection

Before bed, answer these:

What went well today?

Example: "I completed my work task on time."

What could I improve tomorrow?

Example: "Take breaks to avoid burnout."

Why it helps:
Reflecting helps you grow without being hard on yourself.

CBT is Your Companion

I found CBT so helpful because it felt like untangling a mess of wires in my mind. I've faced internal doubts and external judgments. But this process gave me clarity and control.

Imagine this: Your phone notepad becomes your safe space, a space where you can heal, work through emotions, and celebrate your resilience.

Pro Tips

Keep it Simple: Jot quick notes; no pressure to write essays.

Be Kind to Yourself: Some days will feel harder. That's okay.

Celebrate Progress: Look back weekly and notice how far you've come.

Remember, this is your journey, and even the smallest step counts.

You're amazing, just as you are.

LGBTQIA+ Body Scan

This body scan technic as a stress reducer is designed with love and care, offering a safe, grounding practice tailored for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Whether you're navigating stress, dysphoria, or just want to connect with your body, this exercise is here to help you find calm and acceptance.

Before You Start

Find a quiet, comfortable space.

Sit or lie down—whatever feels good for you.

Close your eyes (or keep them soft) and take a deep breath.

Body Scan Steps

1. Ground Yourself

Take three deep breaths. Feel the air fill your lungs, then gently release it.

Say to yourself:

🫶 **"I am safe. This is my time to connect with myself."**

2. Focus on Your Toes

Bring your attention to your toes.

Wiggle them if you like. Notice how they feel.
Are they warm, cold, tense, or relaxed?

Gently say to yourself:

"Thank you, toes, for carrying me through my journey."

3. Move to Your Legs

Shift your focus to your legs, from your ankles to your thighs.

Do you feel grounded? Are there areas of tightness?
If you notice tension, imagine sending kindness to that area, like a warm, soft rainbow light.

Say to yourself:

"These legs have walked through my story with strength."

4. Notice Your Hips and Pelvis

This area might hold a lot of emotion, especially for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Breathe deeply and notice how it feels.
If there's discomfort or dysphoria, remind yourself:

"This is my body, my home. It deserves kindness and care."

5. Focus on Your Stomach and Chest

Feel the rise and fall of your breath.
Does this area feel tight or open?
Imagine your breath spreading warmth and compassion throughout your body.

Say to yourself:

"My heart beats with courage and love."

6. Bring Attention to Your Arms and Hands

Notice any sensations in your arms, wrists, or fingers.
Gently wiggle your fingers to release any tension.

Say to yourself:

"These hands help me create, connect, and care."

7. Focus on Your Shoulders and Neck

Roll your shoulders if it feels good.
Let go of any weight you're carrying here.

Say to yourself:

"I release the burdens of judgment and embrace my truth."

8. End with Your Head and Face

Relax your jaw, soften your eyes, and notice your breath.

Feel the crown of your head reaching upward, as if a rainbow is shining out from it.

Say to yourself:

"I am whole. I am enough. I am radiant."

9. Close the Practice

Take three deep breaths again. Slowly wiggle your fingers and toes.

When you're ready, open your eyes.

Say to yourself:

"I am proud of who I am and the journey I'm on."

Why It Helps

A body scan can:

Reduce stress and anxiety.
Help you reconnect with your body, even if you've felt disconnected.
Offer moments of self-compassion and grounding.
This is your time, your body, your safe space. You're amazing just as you are.

Find PEACE with chosen friends under the RAINBOW

Chapter 3

GENDER

If you don't have information about gender topics, here are some short terms to help you understand.

1. Gender Identity

Definition:

- How a person deeply feels about their gender.
- It is internal and may not align with external appearances or societal expectations.

Forms of Expression:

- **Man**: A person who identifies as male, regardless of their sex assigned at birth.
- **Woman:** A person who identifies as female, regardless of their sex assigned at birth.
- **Transgender:** Someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- **Non-Binary:** Someone who does not identify strictly as male or female.

- **Genderqueer:** A person who rejects traditional gender roles and identities beyond male and female.

- **Agender:** Someone who identifies as having no gender or being gender-neutral.

- **Bigender:** A person who identifies as two genders, either simultaneously or at different times.

- **Genderfluid:** Someone whose gender identity changes over time or depending on the situation.

- **Two-Spirit:** A term used by some Indigenous North American cultures to describe a person who embodies both masculine and feminine spirits.

- **Demiboy:** A person who partially identifies as male but not entirely.

- **Demigirl:** A person who partially identifies as female but not entirely.

- **Androgynous:** A person whose identity or presentation blends or avoids traditional male and female traits.

- **Questioning:** Someone exploring and figuring out their gender identity.

2. Gender Expression

Definition:

The outward way someone presents their gender through clothing, behavior, voice, or appearance.

Forms of Expression:

- **Masculine:** Associated with traits society traditionally links to men (e.g., suits, short hair).

- **Feminine:** Linked to traits traditionally linked to women (e.g., dresses, makeup).

- **Androgynous:** A blend of masculine and feminine traits.

Key Point:

Gender expression is about how a person chooses to present themselves and may not necessarily reflect their gender identity.

3. Assigned Sex at Birth (ASAB)

Definition:

The label (male, female, or intersex) given to a person at birth based on physical anatomy.

Categories:

- **Male:** Assigned based on the presence of typically male anatomy.
- **Female:** Assigned based on the presence of typically female anatomy.

- **Intersex:** A person born with sex characteristics that don't fit typical male or female categories.

Key Point:

ASAB is biological and does not determine a person's gender identity or experience.

4. Physical and Emotional Attraction

Definition:

The way a person is romantically or sexually drawn to others.

Subcategories:

- **Physical Attraction**

Being drawn to someone based on their physical appearance or sexual chemistry.

Examples: "I'm physically attracted to men."

- **Emotional Attraction**

Feeling a deeper connection with someone based on shared values, understanding, or emotional intimacy.

Examples: "I feel emotionally attracted to people of all genders."

Orientation Terms:

- **Homosexual:** Attraction to people of the same gender.
- **Heterosexual:** Attraction to people of the opposite gender.

- **Bisexual:** Attraction to more than one gender.

- **Pansexual:** Attraction to people regardless of their gender.

- **Asexual:** Little to no sexual attraction to others.

Key Point:

Physical and emotional attraction can exist separately or together, and they vary widely from person to person.

5. Intersection of Identity, Expression, and Attraction

How They Interact:

- **Gender Identity:** Who you are.

- **Gender Expression:** How you present.

- **Physical and Emotional Attraction:** Who you are drawn to physically or emotionally.

Key Point:

All these elements are distinct and personal. They may or may not align with societal expectations or norms.

CLOUD and TEARS

A Dream of Home, Together my Husband

I dream of a house, nestled in the colors of a rainbow, a place where warmth surrounds us and love fills the air. In this dream, there's a cat, a soft, warm companion that curls up beside us, a constant reminder of the comfort and peace we've longed for.

I dream of waking up in this home, where the light shines through rainbow-colored windows, casting a peaceful glow over everything. I dream of our usual hug, the embrace that makes everything feel right, as if the world pauses just for a moment to allow us to feel safe, to feel loved. Every morning, I wish for the joy of hugging and kissing my husband, starting each day with a touch of love, a simple gesture that means the world.

I ask for this. I ask for a space where we can be ourselves, where we can feel free from the weight of the world. I hope for a life where warmth, peace, and love are always present, where the joy of simple moments, like sharing a hug, a kiss, or petting a cat, fills our hearts with happiness.

I hope for a house that is more than just a structure. I hope for a home where we are together, surrounded by the colors of love, acceptance, and everything we deserve.

STAY WITH RAINBOW,

Özgür Deniz Babukhin (Pınar)